

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 184 196

EA 012 382

AUTHOR Heyman, Richard D.
TITLE Talk about School Subjects: A Sociological View.
Curriculum, Media & Instruction Occasional Paper No. 3.
INSTITUTION Alberta Univ., Edmonton. Faculty of Education.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 25p.: For related documents, see EA 012 381-385.
AVAILABLE FROM Secondary Education Publications, Dept. of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2G5 (\$1.50)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Content Analysis; *Curriculum Development; *Curriculum Evaluation; *Curriculum Guides; Drama; Foreign Countries; History; Humanities; Latin; Mathematics; Modern Language Curriculum; Power Structure; Science Curriculum; Secondary Education; *Social Values
IDENTIFIERS *Canada; *England

ABSTRACT

School subjects do not hold an equally secure position in any educational system. Some subjects are required of all children, some are required of only some children, and some are not required at all. It is the task of this paper to show how people talk about subjects with respect to their place in the school curriculum. The social valuing of subjects involves justification, legitimation, ideology, and power. Some subject discussions, drawn mainly from Canadian and English curriculum guides and other curriculum publications, are described in light of the concept of legitimation. The publications examined provided discussions of aims, goals, and objectives, while avoiding or obscuring the ideological foundations of legitimation. The validating or a priori principles involved by the justification, both explicitly and implicitly, are assessed through a content analysis of the statements found in the curriculum publications examined. Quotations representative of the total range of justifications found in all the sources used in the fields of mathematics, science, Latin, drama, history, and modern languages are followed by an analysis. (Author/MLP)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

To Our Reader:

This paper is part of the Department of Secondary Education's CMI Publication Series. It is an occasional paper, and as such we invite you to focus on a dimension of the field of CURRICULUM, MEDIA AND INSTRUCTION. It is also an informal paper and as such it is meant to allow the author to bring to the reader thoughts at some moment of development, from an early exploratory moment to a later more refined moment.

The series hopefully will consist of papers "occasionally" printed as relevant papers come our way. We see them as conversation pieces - "thought-works" that might engage readers and, possibly on occasions author and reader, to come together in a face-to-face "talk-talk".

Thus, we recognize the papers as being essentially incomplete, rooted in the idea that collaborations cannot be exhausted by an actual paper nor any actual reader. We ask you, our reader to collaborate by using the papers to grasp the reason for the essential incompleteness, that is, we ask you to grasp the conception of analysis which makes the papers possible. We ask you this because we feel that these papers themselves, although they have to be used to make the point, are never the point.

The point is, as far as we are concerned, in collaborative dialogue.

Communications Committee
Department of Secondary Education

Sr. Therese Craig
Dr. Madeleine Monod
Dr. Douglas Engel
Dr. T. Aoki
Shirley Brauer, Research
Assistant

CMI

Occasional Paper Series

No. 3

Published by

The Department of
Secondary Education
Faculty of Education
The University of Alberta

Copyright © 1979
held by the author

Talk About School Subjects: A Sociological View *

Richard D. Heyman

The University of Calgary

I

This paper starts with the observation that school subjects, i.e., maths, the sciences, modern and ancient languages, history, metal work, physical education, etc., are not equally secure in any educational system. Some subjects are required of all children, some are required of only some children, and some are not required at all; some appear in the curriculum of every primary and secondary school and some appear only irregularly, or only in specially designated schools for specially designated children. In general, school subjects differ in the degree to which they are available in schools. It is the task of this paper to show how people talk about subjects with respect to their place in the school curriculum.

In an effort to explain this talk, a number of concepts are used to describe certain states and processes affecting the social valuing of subjects. We use the term justification to mean the argument put forth to "prove" that a subject meets appropriate norms or criteria of approval. It may do so in terms of existing norms or it may reinterpret them or offer new ones. Its purpose is to establish or reinforce a claim to a "legitimate" place in the curriculum for a subject which is associated with a special interest group or groups in society. Legitimation follows as the evaluation of the argument of justification in terms of norms and involves a decision as to whether the justification does or does not fulfill the conditions of these norms, regardless of their source and nature. The norms themselves are

*The research for this paper was done while its author was a Visiting Fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge, with support from a Canada Council Research Grant and Leave Fellowship during the 1975-76 academic year.

ideological insofar as they represent a construction of reality identifiable as belonging to a special interest group.

Power is an important concept in understanding legitimation because legitimation is always problematic to some degree. Since the common sense legitimation of school subjects is often perceived by others as neither common nor sense, the issue of conflict resolution necessarily arises. Power of both interpretation and its enforcement must enter into all discussions of legitimation. Power, therefore, has not only to do with the enforcement of rules; it is also to be able to create, interpret and change them, with the power of the legitimation of school subjects resting in the power of interpretation. Power is found in the class of those who tell us what forms of cognitive norms or knowledge are acceptable to our way of knowing reality.

Power may permit distortions or suspension of norms, as for example, the South African decision to treat the Chinese as non-white but to make the Japanese honorary whites; or the diagnosing of political dissidents in the Soviet Union as mentally ill and their subsequent committal to mental hospitals. In both cases the crucial factor is the power of substantive evaluation of the degree to which individual cases are or are not an instance of general norms. One cannot help but observe that once we understand legitimation as partly a function of normative decisions, the dialectic relationship between it and power becomes evident. Like a binary star system they are virtually inseparable, being connected by bonds of force that allow both to maintain a position which they could not do independently. In looking at the legitimation of school subjects therefore, we are looking at an instance of a more general process by which the knowledge structure of society is generated and maintained.

An alternative concept of power, but one which is equally important to our discussion goes as follows: if we consider knowledge as power in

the sense of "the ability to connect circumstance A to circumstance B" (Willer, 1971:17), the efficacy and success of science and maths, compared to simple rationalism, empiricism, magic, mysticism or religion, can hardly be disputed. No other systems of knowledge have been able to compete in the task of connecting, controlling, and predicting the relationship of A to B. This invites one to answer the question "What knowledge is of most worth?" with the reply, "That knowledge which is most powerful!"

II

On the following pages we describe some subject discussions, drawn mainly from Canadian and English sources, in light of the concept of legitimization outlined above. We have seen it as our most essential task to go beneath common sense ideas of subject value in order to explain legitimization at what we take to be a more fundamental level. We have focussed our analysis on the content of the justification rather than on the amount of justification. We have arbitrarily chosen a sample of what are commonly called subjects ranging from maths and science to Latin and history, and have concentrated on subjects from the 'academic' curriculum although we think that our method of documentary analysis would apply equally well to the 'vocational' and 'technical' subjects.

Our method has been to assess the validating or a priori principles involved by the justification, both explicitly and implicitly, through a content analysis of the statements we found in the curriculum publications we examined. Although content analysis of this kind might seem more appropriate to historical than to sociological analysis, we think that the configuration of a problem must be left to decide the most useful method for its investigation. Our specific concern with school knowledge legitimacy

made it essential, at this stage of our research, that we be able to suggest patterns of justification as they have appeared over the past decade in Western industrial society. This concern took us quite naturally to the published discussions which follow. In each case we quote what we commonsensically judge to be statements representative of the total range of justifications found in all our sources on each subject and then proceeded to their analysis. We must leave it to the reader to judge the strength, reasonableness and utility of this approach to understanding school subject legitimation.

An examination of mathematics publications has provided the following types of justifications:¹

- (a) the value of "skill in maths operations, powers of logical analysis and precise presentation of solutions"*
- (b) the value of "maths as a method of thinking and communicating"*
- (c) the value of "a knowledge of maths operations and concepts"*
- (d) maths is "an opportunity to explore abstract ideas and concepts"*
- (e) maths is "the capstone of the general cultural education of the college capable student"*
- (f) the "appreciation of maths as a deductive science"*
- (g) maths is "the language of orderliness and ordered thinking"*
- (h) maths is "the tool and language of science"*
- (i) maths is "an integral part of everyday life and culture"*
- (j) maths as "giving pleasure"*
- (k) maths as "developing patterns of thinking which are fundamental patterns of all thinking"*
- (l) maths as "a creation of man"*
- (m) "the contribution of maths to progress"*
- (n) "recognizing that "citizens of tomorrow's world" will need a greater degree of understanding and competence in maths than ever before"*

(o) the importance of maths as "a pre-requisite to further work in the natural and social sciences"*

(p) "the humanistic and cultural value of maths"*

A study by the Council of Europe notes that mathematics is one of the few subjects studied by all pupils in the academic secondary school, and that in virtually all the council countries a qualification in maths is required for entrance to higher education. It argues that maths is considered to be an indispensable part of general culture because "It is the symbolic language of science, one of the 'communicators', mastery of which is essential for the acquisition of further knowledge in many other fields" (Halls and Humphreys, 1968; p. 10).

Maths is justified in terms of the knowledge which maths itself both embodies and makes accessible. The value of maths is a knowledge of maths operations and concepts. Its conceptual structure is presented as unproblematic by the publications we examined and its instrumental value seems to be taken for granted. The legitimacy of maths as a school subject is unquestioned in general, although we know that its legitimacy as a subject for all pupils at a more advanced level is a contentious issue having to do with standards and measures of ability. Nevertheless, although the distribution of maths knowledge in schools may be an issue, the place of maths as a legitimate school subject is not! To question the value of maths as a school subject would be, we could argue, to threaten the core of a way of life, since without a knowledge of maths most of the technology upon which our material life depends would be impossible. Therefore, to suggest that we eliminate maths totally as a school subject would be one of the most radical suggestions we could make. The extent to which this is an unthinkable suggestion is an indication of the place which maths holds in the value system of our society. But societies have existed and can exist without any formalized comprehensive

system of maths, and certainly without teaching it in schools (Gay and Cole, 1967). In this respect the inclusion of maths as a school subject can be understood as a value decision emanating from a common ideology in which maths as a subject of study is not easily separated from maths as a particular way of knowing.

It is a way of describing and defining aspects of the material world. Although not the only way, it has proved to be quite a successful way. It has helped us achieve 'control' over many still mysterious physical phenomena and has assisted the general advance of science in more ways than one could describe. Nevertheless, the legitimization of maths as a school subject is based on an ideological position which places a special value on such control over nature as maths, and also science, give us.

From a common sense position we might argue that its value, or validity, is based on utility; maths and science have proved themselves successful in solving problems which our society wanted solved. But it is difficult to distinguish the definition of a problem from the social system in which it is found. The designation of what constitutes a problem is normative at the most fundamental level of analysis. One may, in all sincerity, argue that problems are illusory; in essence the world and all created things are perfect expressions of a transcendent creative force just as they are; one may say, with no irony intended, that "all's for the best in this best of all possible worlds." Man may experience problems of all types depending upon their level of understanding, but these problems are illusory. This view of the world is not mere tautology. It is a statement of what is real and what is not and it implies a measure of true and false claims to knowledge which is neither logical nor scientific. It is not publicly available in that sense. It is private. Private knowledge of this sort seems less likely to be found

as subjects taught in our schools where the emphasis is not only on public knowledge in the social sense, but on public knowledge in the epistemological sense. Lawrence Stenhouse has characterized this propensity nicely in the phrase "Prophets may teach private wisdom: teachers must deal in public knowledge" (1975: 6).

Curriculum statements referring to science point out that science should be studied because of that which science has and can achieve. It is taken to be a matter of common sense that:

- (a) pupils should "acquire some competence in critical thinking and methods of science"*
- (b) pupils should "develop a scientific attitude"*
- (c) pupils should "gain some skill in the reading and analysis of current articles on scientific subjects"*
- (d) the curriculum in science should "promote an understanding of the role of science historically"*
- (e) pupils "must be familiar with science because they will live in a civilization increasingly dependent upon science"***
- (f) pupils "will need, for their own sake and that of the community, knowledge of the content of various fields of science, scientific discoveries and their most important applications"***
- (g) science is "useful in developing vocational knowledge and skill"*
- (h) science "provides a way of viewing one's world"*
- (i) science "contributes to the healthy growth of pupils from childhood to citizenship in a democratic community by using science's materials, methods and attitudes"*

It is, however, inaccurate to lump all the sciences together as there is status differentiation among science subjects. In a report of the Council of Europe biology is said to enjoy inferior academic status compared to physics and chemistry in secondary schools, a difference which could be attributed to its historical association with 'nature study' and that area's

less than scientific mode of enquiry (Saunders, 1972: 5). Nevertheless, it is argued that "the contribution it (biology) makes to the development of logical thought and the experimental approach, and to a deepened understanding of the natural world, should, nevertheless, assure it of an important position in an academic education: (Szunders, 1972: 6).

Physics, on the other hand, has unquestioned status as the most exact and fundamental of the sciences. It has taken western culture farthest along the road away from common sense and supernatural explanations of physical phenomena (although it has also raised numerous philosophical problems having to do with its own concepts and operations). A study of secondary school physics teaching in Council of Europe countries remarks that physics "has made the greatest contribution to technological development and has shown an intellectual structure that has given a rational and quantitative interpretation to natural phenomena. By virtue of this it has freed man from a fear of much that had been given a supernatural explanation as well as enabling him to make the greatest use of natural resources" (Halls et. al., 1972: 3).

The contrast of discussions of Latin with discussions of maths and science is striking. Latin has increasingly lost its position of status and prestige during this century. It is not difficult for most people to imagine a world without Latin; the experience of it in their lives is minimal to say the least. Latin cannot assume that it enjoys any common sense legitimacy; it must make its case explicit and by so doing show how Latin can be subsumed within those relevant evaluative principles which could be called the increasingly empiricist and materialist bases of value, allied to an explicit social movement towards eliminating overt measures of differentiation both in schools and in the larger society. Although Latin still retains some of its former high status in the selective academic secondary school curricula of many western countries, its legitimacy is becoming increasingly problematic.

Looked at in reverse we might well ask what the popular reaction would be to a decree that Latin will be compulsory for all children. In the context of nineteenth century European education such a decree would have been a radical egalitarian reform. In the second half of the twentieth century it would be considered by most parents as anachronistic nonsense. The instrumental value of Latin is socially and economically insignificant today and its legitimacy as a subject in schools encounters strong opposition from many quarters including academics, parents and politicians. The justifications put forward show quite clearly that while the utility of maths and science is taken for granted, the utility of Latin must be made explicit. In discussions of Latin's place in schools we are urged to see:

- (a) The "intrinsic value of Latin as an area of study"*
- (b) Latin as "the source of Western culture"*
- (c) Latin as "the basis of religion, philosophy, politics and the arts"*
- (d) Latin as "developing the individual, logical thought, intellectual curiosity, literary appreciation and ability to read, spell and write English"*
- (e) Latin as "leading to the thorough study and reasoned solution of problems; and the world needs people who have learned to do this"*
- (f) Latin as "giving an appreciation of Roman civilization"*
- (g) Latin as "helping us to understand the contribution of Rome to our way of life"*
- (h) Latin as "a basis for the study of philosophy"*

The argument for Latin's value is based on the beliefs, illustrated above and in the following excerpts: "...a true evaluation of our present way of life cannot be made without reference to the achievements of Greece and Rome" (Schools Council, 1967a: 3); and "Many thousands who learnt little or nothing of the classics at school have seen that ancient culture is

seminal in important aspects of our life, that its influence is still pervasive in modes of thought and literature, and that much of enduring value was expressed by the Greeks and Romans with a directness and aesthetic appeal which makes an immediate impact on the open mind" (Schools Council, Teaching Classics Today, 1969).

Our limited data shows that major emphasis is put on the value of Latin for understanding contemporary life and culture more than the value of being able to quote from the Latin authors, or to be able to translate in both directions and to write Latin verse. However much this change in emphasis is simply making explicit that which was once understood, it clearly illustrates the following point: the kinds of knowledge Latin makes possible are no longer taken for granted as legitimate in schools. Latin is no longer a required subject for university entrance, nor a subject which all academic secondary school pupils must take. In order to survive, Latin must show itself able to attract pupils on its own merits, utilitarian or other, or it must find some other source of legitimacy.

If Latin illustrates a case in which a subject has lost its formerly secure position, drama is an example of a subject which, in England, is in the process of seeking an improved place in the curriculum. What possible claims can it make for legitimization? Some of the more obvious aspects of such claims would include a consensus as to what constitutes the subject, particularly those parts of the subject in which pupils would be formally examined. Subjects in which consensus is absent at this level face immediate difficulty in making their case since what seems to be part of the concept of legitimate school knowledge rests in its public testability. Drama, unless defined as a factual knowledge of that part of literature concerned with plays, or with the technical side of play production, does not easily

present itself for testing. This is especially true given some of the more inclusive definitions of the subject found in recent discussions. In 1972 it was said that "Drama occurs when the whole person (body, voice, mind) is involved in an imaginary situation where a problem is solved and a statement made. Drama is unique in that it offers imaginary situations where there is the potential for the use of the whole person for the resolution of a conflict and the solving of a problem" (Schools Council, Examinations in Drama, 1974: 11). Presently subjects like drama enjoy a marginal legitimacy in the school curriculum. However, the availability of both internal and external sources of power at any one level allows for considerable local variation within the context of a decentralized system of educational control. Patterns of overall legitimacy are not exactly reproduced in every school and the interests of both individuals and groups in society can be accommodated, within limits, as regards subjects on the fringe of the curriculum.

The following argument seemed to us to be one typical for many subjects in the humanities in its emphasis on its contribution to the "good life": "The ultimate purpose of those who teach the humanities is to shape minds and satisfy souls: to train the judgement and taste of their pupils so that they can be trusted to choose the better and reject the worse, to awaken in them the creative instinct, so that by creating something themselves, or by appreciating what others have created, they can experience true happiness" (Schools Council, An Approach Through Classics, 1967: 1). This approach to legitimation is exemplified in the arguments for history which we present below:

- (a) History "gives cohesion and deeper meaning to the rest of the curriculum and should therefore remain an essential element in a pupil's education"
- (b) history "puts knowledge in context" **

- (c) history "develops pupils' powers of thinking and the desire to search for evidence and draw conclusions from it in a spirit of fairmindedness"*
- (d) history "develops sympathies and imagination yet teaches a respect for facts"*
- (e) history "makes pupils accept the fact that contrary positions may be honestly held by those seeing events from different perspectives"*
- (f) history "points out the evolution of institutions and ideas found in democracy and its ideals of social equality and government"*
- (g) history "indicates the interdependence of all nations and peoples and the need for tolerance and cooperation"*
- (h) history "deepens one's understanding of life's problems"*
- (i) history "develops a spirit of enquiry"*
- (j) history "prepares pupils to assume responsibilities and practice methods of democratic action in the conduct of school activities"*
- (k) history "fosters the pupils' natural compassion"*
- (l) history "develops pupils' reasoning powers"*
- (m) history "helps them to develop a sense of responsibility, as a citizen, for national affairs"*
- (n) history "helps pupils discover their own and others' attitudes and prejudices"*
- (o) "pupils' should have a knowledge of the methods of history which include the evaluation of documentary evidence in analyzing and making judgements about past events"*
- (p) history "provides the opportunity to probe the subtelties and complexities of historical issues and understand that there are a few which have clear-cut, pat answers"*

These justifications are more extensive, more elaborate and certainly more varied than we have seen in maths and science. History, tries to argue its legitimacy by appealing to a wide range of purportedly important areas of social value, from "true happiness" to "a respect for facts" and "the evaluation of documentary evidence".

A second area of the humanities, the study of modern languages, provides

a similar range of justifications although it is more limited in some of its claims by the differences in its logical and conceptual structure. The following are some illustrations from discussions of French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian and Ukranian:

- French: (a) "the large French-speaking minority" (in Canada)*
 (b) "it broadens one's outlook"*
 (c) "useful for foreign travel"*
 (d) "fosters goodwill and understanding towards Francophones"*
- German: (a) "a major language of science and mathematics"*
 (b) "understanding German cultural traditions in music, art, literature, philosophy, architecture, psychology, and psychiatry"*
- Italian: (a) "justified by Italy's place in the cultural history of western civilization"*
 (b) "current role of Italy in fashion, films and manufacturing"*
 (c) "the size of the Italian speaking minority (in parts of Canada)"*
- Spanish: (a) "shows the common structural relationships between Spanish and other languages"*
 (b) "help develop an appreciation of (Canadian) culture and language"*
 (c) "gives the pupil an interest and appreciation of Spanish-speaking people's cultural traditions"*
- Russian: (a) "understanding and speaking Russian"*
 (b) "reading Russian authors with enjoyment"*
- Ukranian: (a) "its relationship to other Slavonic languages"*
 (b) "the contribution of Slavonic peoples in the arts and sciences"*
 (c) "the size of the Ukranian speaking population in the world"*
 (d) "the Ukraine's highly developed education system"*

- (e) "the number of scientific periodicals published in Ukranian"*
- (f) "the extent of its study at universities in Europe and North America"*
- (g) "its service to the democratic ideals of humanity"*

We have also seen it argued that one must study modern languages in order to understand contemporary thought and to take a role in world trade and world affairs. A "culturally mature" nation supposedly has room for the study of languages other than its own.

The values which modern language justifications assume to be legitimate include a diversity which varies according to the language in question: French appeals to political expediency and cultural and practical utility; German to academic and scholarly utility; Italian to cultural history, economic and cultural utility and political expediency; Spanish to linguistic and cultural utility; Russian to a knowledge of the language itself and to its intellectual pleasure; Ukrainian to a wide range of cultural, political and scholarly and academic uses and values. The major source of legitimacy is supposed to be recognition of the use to which knowledge of a modern language can be put. Legitimacy rests in the taken for granted value of these cultural, economic, political and academic uses. In general languages are not assumed to contain their own justification. Rarely do we find knowledge of the language itself preferred as sufficient justification for its inclusion in the curriculum. Its legitimacy is derived from the taken for granted value of what languages can lead to and this utility is not assumed to be self-evident.

It makes no sense, however, to suggest that utility or practical value is the ultimate basis of legitimation. The argument is circular in so far as utility becomes both cause and effect of a subject's inclusion.

It does not explain why some subjects are taken for granted as legitimate and other must justify themselves. Utility itself must have an ideological antecedent of the kind suggested earlier which validates the fundamental basis of the subject which in turn legitimates the subject's utility. Although the Schools Council in England may argue that "the claim of the humanities in the curriculum rests upon the assertion that their study enhances understanding and hence judgement in those areas of practical living which involve complex considerations of empirical data, values and cultural traditions" (Humanities Curriculum Project, n.d.) this fact is not taken for granted. Subjects in the humanities make this clear in their justifications.

III

A further consideration in explaining differences in justifications between subjects falling within our main paradigm, and other subjects, and this applies particularly well to languages, is found in the suggestion that some subjects must legitimate themselves through appeal to special and powerful interest groups, within the society, whose evaluative principles legitimate these subjects for reasons special to that group alone, reasons which lie outside of or contradict the prevailing ideology. In these cases the inclusion of a subject in the curriculum seems to be primarily a function of power. Thus Latin may not be a legitimate subject for children in a North American high school but may appear in specific schools. The same analysis must apply to Latin in the grammar school, lycée or gymnasium. The interests of a special and powerful group in society make it legitimate for some children in the absence of a more universal legitimacy. These and other subjects may occupy their places as a result of the power of interest groups

in society to have their special needs accommodated. The further removed such subjects are from the predominant ideological basis of legitimation, the more dependent they are for their existence on power and the actual or potential use of coercion or force.

The curriculum guides and other curriculum publications we have examined provide discussions of aims, goals and objectives, while avoiding or obscuring the ideological foundations of legitimation. Because of the nature of pedagogy and the intrinsically selective nature of all educational systems in which some members must do better than others, all subjects serve the interests of some groups more than others. Published curriculum discussions by groups who make curriculum decisions are the results of activities by interest groups which have no reason to want to say or do anything that would undermine the legitimacy of their subjects. Because of the vested interests of curriculum committees, published discussions provide us with glosses, with surface accounts of a subject's value, while ignoring, or perhaps never recognizing or discussing, the norms and values which form their interest in and allegiance to the subject. It is part of a constant struggle for power to have one's own subject enjoy a secure position in the school structure. As we have seen, legitimation accounts do not go beyond common sense justifications of subjects, yet suggest much about the deeper structures of value, ideology and power within school systems and the larger society.

Common sense, for example, tells us that all children must know certain things if they are to live as adults in society, and the schools of a society are normally expected to include this knowledge as part of the curriculum. An English scholar, Raymond Williams, has noted three functions which he thinks cover the general purposes of an educational system. He writes that "...a child must be taught, first, the accepted behaviour and values of his

society; second, the general knowledge and attitudes appropriate to an educated man, and third, a particular skill by which he will earn his living and contribute to the welfare of his society" (Williams, 1965; p. 147). However, such a vague formulation provides no insight into the mechanisms by which these general goals are defined and given meaning in terms of specific subjects. If these purposes are to be taken as evaluative principles governing what is to be taught, then it is quite obvious that the struggle for the curriculum will be won on the basis of the power to define and interpret and decide which specific knowledge fulfills the general goals. Going further Williams makes other common sense observations regarding the way in which the traditional elitist curriculum in England still influences the modern one.

An educational curriculum, as we have seen again and again in past periods, expresses a compromise between an inherited selection of interests and the emphasis of new interests. At varying points in History, even this compromise may be long delayed, and it will often be muddled. The fact about our present curriculum is that it was essentially created by the nineteenth century, following some eighteenth-century models, and retaining elements of the medieval curriculum near its centre. A case can be made for every item in it, yet its omissions are startling. The social studies, even of an elementary kind, are virtually omitted at the level which every child can be certain of reaching, yet it would be difficult to argue that a detailed description of the workings of parliamentary and local government, of the law and public administration, of the organization of industry, of the evolution and character of modern social groups, of the techniques by which a modern society is studied and influenced, is less relevant than, say, the detailed descriptions of the geography of South America which now have traditional sanction. Where education in the social studies is given at all, except in exceptional schools, it is outside 'business', as modern languages and science were outside 'business' in the nineteenth century, and its teaching varies in quality from simple description to the casual and hortatory process—a true descendant of 'moral rescue'—known as 'civics'. In the arts, similarly, it is a meagre response to our cultural tradition and problems to teach, outside literature, little more than practical drawing and music, with hardly any attempt to begin either the history and criticism of music and visual art forms, or the criticism of those forms of film, televised drama, and jazz to which every child will go home. Even in English, despite the efforts of many fine teachers, most children will leave even grammar schools without ever having practised the

critical reading of newspapers, magazines, propaganda, and advertisements, which will form the bulk of their actual adult reading. Meanwhile, in science, the vast and exciting history of scientific discovery and its social effects will have been given quite inadequate attention.

(Williams, 1965: 172-73)

Yet all of this, it seems to us, is simply begging the question. It brings us no closer to explaining the processes by which one group's relevancies dominate. Clearly common sense is not at all common when it comes to school subjects. Decisions as to what knowledge is common sense or relevant are not always as obvious as Williams implies, nor is it clear how such understandings come about or are maintained. In no society is there unanimity on questions of what school knowledge is necessary for adult participation, nor which subjects are more important than others for all or some children to learn. Monolithic conceptions of common sense understandings quickly begin to disintegrate upon empirical observation and become problematic. The evaluative principles present in common sense thinking about school subjects are not always evident, although the illusion of unanimity is sometimes given where control of education is highly centralized.² To understand the process of legitimation is not therefore as straightforward as it might first appear.

NOTES

1. These arguments have been taken from numerous provincial government curriculum publications in Canada, signified by a single* and from Schools Council publications in England, signified by a double**. We have used this designation throughout the rest of the paper. Although no precise references are given in the text of our paper, all sources are listed in the bibliography. We have also made no attempt at comparative analysis between countries although this will be necessary at a subsequent stage of work in studying legitimating ideologies.

2. Scotford-Archer and Vaughan (1971) present an interesting model for analyzing control and challenge.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Columbia

- 1966 Secondary School Mathematics. Victoria: Department of Education.
- 1967 Beginners' Russian 11. Victoria: Department of Education.
- 1967 Secondary School Languages: Latin 9, 10, 11, 12, Spanish 9, 10, 11, 12. (Reprint from Languages, 1964). Victoria: Department of Education.
- 1968 Secondary School Languages: Beginners' Latin 11, Beginners' Spanish 11, Beginners' Italian 11. Victoria: Department of Education.
- 1974 Secondary School Curriculum Guide Social Studies: Geography 12 (Revision and Reprint of Interim Edition 1970). Victoria: Department of Education.

Cicourel, Aaron

- 1973 Cognitive Sociology: Language and Meaning in Social Interaction Riverside, New Jersey: The Free Press.

Gay, John & Michael Cole

- 1967 The New Mathematics and Old Culture. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston.

Hale, William Gardner

- 1892 Aims and Methods in Classical Study. Boston: Ginn and Co.

Halls, W.D. and Doreen Humphreys

- 1968 European Curriculum Studies: No. 1: Mathematics. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Halls, W.D., P. FIGUEROA and R.J. Griggs

- 1972 European Curriculum Studies: No. 6: Physics. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Horton, Robin and Ruth Finnegan (eds.)

- 1973 Modes of Thought: Essays on Thinking in Western and Non Western Societies. London: Faber and Faber.

Kuhn, Thomas S.

- 1962 The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. International Encyclopedia of Unified Science Vol.2 No.2 Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ministry of Education

- 1958 Teaching Mathematics in Secondary Schools. London: H.M.S.O.
- 1959 Suggestions for the Teaching of Classics. London: H.M.S.O.

Nova Scotia

- 1966 German Grade 10: A Teaching Guide (Tentative Edition). E. Office Bulletin No. 9: 1965-55. Halifax: Department of Education.
- 1967 History Grades 7-9: A Teaching Guide (Tentative Edition). Halifax: Department of Education.
- 1967 Science Grades 7 to 9: A Teaching Guide. Halifax: Department of Education.

Ontario

- 1961 Programme de Francais: Classes Secondaires de Langue Francaise Grade 13. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1961 Intermediate and Senior Divisions: Modern Languages. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1961 Intermediate Division Science: Grades 7, 8, 9 and 10. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1962 History: Senior Division. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1963 Latin Courses of Study in Latin for Grades 10, 11 and 12 of The Four-Year Programme. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1964 English. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1966 General and Advanced Levels of Instruction in Grade 13: History. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1966 General and Advanced Levels of Instruction in Grade 13: Classics. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1966 General and Advanced Levels of Instruction in Grade 13: General Science. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1966 Interim Revision: Mathematics. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1968 French Grade 13. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1968 Italian Grades 11, 12 and 13. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1968 Latin and Greek Grade 13. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1968 Russian Grade 13. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1969 Latin and Greek. Toronto: Department of Education.
- 1970 History: Senior Division. Toronto: Department of Education.

Piaget, Jean

- 1972 Psychology and Epistemology. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books).

Saunders, A.

- 1972 European Curriculum Studies: No.3: Biology. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Schools Council

- 1965 Science for the Young School Leaver. London: H.M.S.O.
- 1967 Mathematics for the Majority. London: H.M.S.O.
- 1967a An Approach Through Classics. London: H.M.S.O.
- 1969 Teaching Classics Today. London: H.M.S.O.
- 1974 Examinations in Drama: Report of a Working Party of the Schools Council English Committee's Sub-Committee on Drama. London: Schools Council.
- 1975 Arts and the Adolescent. London: Evans.
- n.d. "Humanities Curriculum Project." Mimeo.
- 1975 The Whole Curriculum 13-16. London: Evans/Methuen.

Scotford-Archer, M. and M. Vaughan

- 1971 "Domination and Assertion in Educational Systems," in Earl Hopper (ed.), Readings in the Theory of Educational Systems. London: Hutchinson University Library.

Scottish Education Department

- 1967 The Teaching of Classics in Schools: Report of the Working Party on the Curricula in Latin and Greek. Edinburgh: H.M.S.O.

Stenhouse, Lawrence

- 1975 An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development. London: Heinemann.

Willer, Judith

- 1971 The Social Determination of Knowledge. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Williams, Raymond

- 1965 The Long Revolution. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

DEPT. OF SECONDARY EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS
CMI OCCASIONAL PAPER SERIES

- | | | |
|--------|--|--------|
| No. 1 | "Democracy and Evaluation"
by Barry MacDonald, University of East Anglia, U.K. | \$1.00 |
| No. 2 | "Toward Curriculum Inquiry In a New Key"
by Ted T. Aoki, University of Alberta, Edmonton | \$1.00 |
| No. 3 | "Talk about School Subjects: A Sociological View"
by Richard D. Heyman, The University of Calgary | \$1.00 |
| No. 4 | <p>A. "Art Education in One Dimension:
Reaching into the Future from the Perspective of
Ideology." (1977)</p> <p>B. "An Inquiry into the Process of Aesthetic Socialization
During School Tours at an Art Museum." (1978)
by Nancy R. Johnson, Department of Art
Education, State University of New York</p> | \$1.00 |
| No. 5 | <p>"The Future—Its Challenge and Implications
for Public Decision Making."</p> <p>Desmond E. Berghofer, Assistant Deputy Minister,
Alberta Advanced Education and Manpower</p> | \$1.00 |
| No. 6 | <p>"Teaching as Being: The Right to Personhood"</p> <p>by Beverley A. Cunningham,
University of British Columbia</p> | \$1.00 |
| No. 7 | <p>"Curriculum in Alberta: A Study of Perceptions"</p> <p>by Kim Krawchenko, Pat Paradis,
and Bill Sommerfeld, University of Alberta</p> | \$1.00 |
| No. 8 | <p>"The International Year of the Child—1979:
'More of Same' or Radical Critique?"</p> <p>by David G. Smith, University of Alberta</p> | \$1.00 |
| No. 9 | <p>"A Critical Analysis of Teacher Education from
the Perspective of Curriculum"</p> <p>by Donald C. Wilson, University of British Columbia</p> | \$1.00 |
| No. 10 | <p>"The Use of Qualitative Forms of Evaluation
for Improving Educational Practice"</p> <p>by Elliot W. Eisner, Stanford University</p> | \$1.00 |
| No. 11 | <p>"Evaluation: Sense-Making of School Programs"</p> <p>by Walter Werner, University of British Columbia</p> | \$1.00 |
| No. 12 | <p>"Towards A New Aesthetic"</p> <p>by John Jagodzinski, The University of Alberta</p> | \$1.00 |
| No. 13 | <p>"The Early Adolescent and the Junior High School
Curriculum by Jame B. Bell and
Peter Ackerman, University of Alberta</p> | \$1.00 |

Please Note: Shipping costs are added to above prices.